

STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER

PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM
SUBJECT

DATE: March 1, 2005

NO: K-4

FROM: CHIEF ERIC JONES

TO: ALL PERSONNEL

INDEX: Peer Support
Critical Incident Support
Employee Personnel Problems

I. POLICY

The Department shall offer the Peer Support Program to employees who request it.

II. PURPOSE

To help Department employees through a critical incident, reducing the likelihood or effects of post-trauma stress reactions, and to provide support and assistance to employees and their families in handling personal problems.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. TRAUMATIC INCIDENT: Any situation that is likely to be emotionally overwhelming to a Department employee.
- B. CRITICAL INCIDENT: A traumatic incident that is work related.
- C. PEER SUPPORT: A process whereby a person discusses a personal issue with a nonprofessional; usually a friend or co-worker. The person defines a problem and decides upon a solution himself/herself. The peer support member utilizes good active listening skills, helps clarify issues, and supports the person through the problem-solving process.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. ORGANIZATION:
 - 1. A steering committee will be comprised of Stockton Police Department employees. The steering committee will be responsible for the successful operation of the program and make recommendations to the Chief of Police through the Program Coordinator. The steering committee will have a Chair, Vice Chair, and secretary.
 - 2. The Chief of Police will appoint a member from the Stockton Police Department to act as the Program Coordinator.
 - 3. The Committee shall consist of representatives from throughout the Department. The Peer Support Program is committed to selecting peer support members with varied ethnic, cultural, and life experiences.
 - 4. An updated listing of city and countywide available community and related resources (such as psychologists, counselors, etc.) shall be maintained.
 - 5. A quorum will consist of a majority of the steering committee members and the Chair or Vice Chair.

V. PARTICIPATION

- A. Peer Support members will consist of the following personnel:
 - 1. Sworn personnel
 - 2. Civilian personnel
- B. Peer Support members may also be supported and assisted by the following personnel:
 - 1. A Department member's union representative (such as SPOA, SCEA, SPMA, etc.).
 - 2. A police chaplaincy representative.
 - 3. Selected psychologists.
 - 4. Subject matter speakers (e.g., Critical Incident).

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. The most important aspect of the Peer Support Program is the promotion of trust, anonymity, and confidentiality. Therefore, communications between Peer Support personnel and employees involved in traumatic incidents shall be confidential, with the following exceptions:
 - 1. There is child abuse involved.
 - 2. There is reason to believe the employee intends to hurt himself/herself or another person.
 - 3. The employee is involved in any crime.
 - 4. At the discretion of the Peer Support member, where, due to substance abuse or other reasons, the employee is a clear and present danger to self, citizens, or fellow employees.
 - (a) If any of the above conditions exist, the Peer Support Program Coordinator shall be notified. In the case of threatened injury, the intended victim shall also be notified.
- B. These exceptions to confidentiality are either required by law or are necessary. Employees who become Peer Support members cannot abdicate their responsibilities to report criminal conduct as is defined in this section. If concerns arise, Peer Support members shall contact the Program Coordinator for guidance.
- C. Confidentiality, as it applies to this program, is not protected by statute; it is protected as a matter of Stockton Police Department policy.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

- A. Employees interested in participating in the Peer Support Program shall submit a memorandum of interest to the Peer Support Program Coordinator.
 - 1. Selections shall be made by the Program Coordinator.
 - 2. For selection to participate in the program, employees shall meet the following criteria:
 - a. In most cases, peer counseling will take the form of on-duty meetings of relatively short duration; however, overtime may be authorized should a peer support member feel it is necessary to submit for it. Overtime requests shall be submitted through the Peer Support Program Coordinator for approval.
 - b. Willingness to attend regularly scheduled meetings and training sessions.
 - c. Willingness to sign an understanding of confidentiality.

- d. Willingness to serve a minimum of one year in the program.

VIII. DESELECTION CRITERIA

- A. Deselection from the program shall be made by the Peer Support Program Coordinator. Deselection will be made based on the following criteria:
 - 1. Breach of confidentiality
 - 2. Lack of participation according to the program guidelines
 - 3. Inability to participate due to professional and/or personal reasons
 - 4. Ineffectiveness, as determined by the steering committee, in response to critical incidents
 - 5. Misuse of overtime

IX. TRAINING

- A. Initial training shall consist of 24 hours of peer support and critical incident instruction. Topics will include the following:
 - 1. Crisis recognition
 - 2. Crisis intervention and counseling
 - 3. Listening skills
 - 4. Assessment skills
 - 5. Substance abuse identification
 - 6. Departmental policies and procedures
 - 7. Defusing and debriefing techniques
 - 8. Sexual Harassment (Federal law mandates that supervisors take action on reported incidents.)
- B. Yearly refresher training shall be conducted. The Stockton Police Department Training Section will coordinate this training.

X. EVALUATION PROGRAM

- A. The Peer Support Coordinator will ensure the completion and submission of an annual report by June 30. The report will include the following:
 - 1. Number of employees comprising the program
 - 2. Number of training sessions held per year
 - 3. Number of debriefings held per year
 - 4. Analysis of the effect of the program

XI. PEER SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

- A. To provide emotional support to employees who express a need for assistance.

- B. To promote trust, appropriate anonymity and confidentiality for employees participating in peer support.
- C. To develop employee's ability to anticipate personal conflicts and an awareness of available alternatives for self-help.
- D. To provide support, upon request, to personnel off-duty due to injury or illness.
- E. To identify quality service providers in the community and surrounding area who can be used as counseling referrals.

XII. CRITICAL INCIDENT FUNCTIONS

- A. To reduce the likelihood of serious post-trauma stress reactions, the following procedures shall be adhered to:
 - 1. In all critical incidents, the Peer Support Coordinator will be notified.
 - a. Peer Support personnel on-duty, or a specifically requested peer support member during an incident, shall be called to the scene immediately.
 - b. The Peer Support Coordinator or Peer Support member at the scene shall evaluate the situation, and confer with the Peer Support Coordinator, if available, to determine if further members shall be notified.
 - 2. When requested by the employee, or if the incident is of such a nature that trauma can be expected, either a supervisor or his/her designee shall notify an on-call or specifically requested Peer Support member to the scene.
 - 3. Employees may select from any available Peer Support member for assistance in handling personal problems.
 - 4. Notify a chaplain to respond for assistance.
- B. Critical incident duties shall include the following:
 - 1. Immediate response when called upon for critical incidents.
 - 2. Contact affected personnel to assess their needs and provide any necessary help.
 - 3. Provide emotional support to involved personnel to diffuse any shock reaction they may be experiencing.
 - 4. Provide information on possible reactions the employee or their family may experience.
 - 5. Suggest resources and referrals the employee or family members may require.
 - 6. Be sure the employee gets home safely.
 - 7. Explain to the employee the purpose and procedure of the mandated visit to the psychologist.
 - 8. Contact the employee within three days after the incident, or as necessary, to determine if additional help is needed.

XIII. INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

- A. It may occur that a Peer Support member is supporting an individual who becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. A Peer Support member should be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. Peer Support members may not hamper or impede the actual investigation nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the Department.

- B. The Peer Support member's role in disciplinary situations will be one of support in dealing with the problems faced by the person in the disciplinary process.
- C. Peer Support members may participate as witnesses before boards and hearings as any Department employee would. They are free to testify on behalf of another employee, and with the permission of the employee, provide information which would normally be considered confidential. When asked or subpoenaed by the Department or other board or body to provide testimony, Peer Support members shall appear and testify.